

THE WHITE HOUSE
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FACT SHEET: Advancing The Human Rights Of LGBT Persons Globally

On June 24, 2014, the White House hosted the first-ever Global Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Human Rights Forum, bringing together the faith community, private sector, philanthropy, HIV and other health advocates, LGBT activists from around the world, and the broader human rights community to discuss how to work together with the U.S. government and others to promote respect for the human rights of LGBT individuals around the world. Participants discussed, among other topics, how to counter legislation that impinges on the rights of LGBT persons, the increasing enforcement in some countries of discriminatory laws that have been dormant for some time, and other threats to LGBT individuals globally.

The Forum is part of the U.S. government's ongoing efforts to use diplomacy and assistance to promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons around the world. These efforts, which are governed by the landmark [Presidential Memorandum of December 2011](#) on "International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons," also include the following:

Combating Criminalization of LGBT Status or Conduct Abroad

- **Country Engagement:** The United States regularly engages with host governments and civil society in countries that have discriminatory laws or are considering legislation that would criminalize consensual same-sex conduct between adults. We press to discourage passage wherever possible, and in cases where laws are on the books, to protect LGBT individuals from violence and discrimination that often accompany the enactment and enforcement of such legislation.
- **Reporting:** We report on violence and discrimination in countries that criminalize same-sex conduct through focused discussion of LGBT issues in the annual [Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#), and we ensure U.S. citizens are aware of discriminatory laws and practices through the Bureau of Consular Affairs' [Country Specific Information \(CSI\)](#).

Protecting Human Rights and Advancing Nondiscrimination through Diplomatic and Pubic Engagement and Foreign Assistance

The United States supports programs that advance human rights and democracy for all; protect human rights defenders; train LGBT leaders to participate more effectively in democratic processes; and improve documentation of human rights violations and abuses.

- **Programming and Partnerships:** The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has expanded its investments, including through the LGBT Global Development Partnership, totaling, for July 2012 to December 2013, approximately \$11 million in stand-alone programs. Funding has built the capacity of local NGOs and LGBT leaders, provided health solutions, and supported victims of violence. In addition, through a groundbreaking partnership with the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, USAID will enhance LGBT entrepreneurship and the growth of LGBT-led enterprises in up to six developing countries. The Department of State-led Global Equality Fund is a multi-stakeholder initiative including governments, private foundations, and corporations that has provided more than \$12 million since its launch in 2011 to promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons in over 50 countries worldwide.
- **Research and Learning to Guide LGBT Assistance Programs:** Improved understanding of the local political, legal and socio-economic realities of LGBT communities is necessary to design assistance programs that are effective and sustainable. USAID funds multiple initiatives to assess the status of LGBT communities worldwide.
- **Examining the rights of LGBT persons in Vetting for U.S. Assistance:** The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) examines human rights, including the human rights of LGBT persons, through its *Civil Liberties* indicator, which is used as one of the criteria to determine country eligibility for MCC assistance. In situations where concerns for the interests of LGBT individuals are identified during due diligence on a proposed project, MCC integrates these concerns into its social and gender assessment and oversight.
- **Access to Health Services:** The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) works with national governments and civil society to help build environments that enable access to HIV prevention, care, and treatment without discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation.
- **Trade and Investment:** Departments and agencies – from the Department of Commerce to the Export-Import Bank of the United States – raise concerns with economic and commercial actors about the effect on the business climate of laws, regulations, and practices that discriminate against LGBT persons. Several U.S. trade agreements include opportunities for cooperative engagement between Parties to address labor-related concerns, including employment discrimination, which provides a mechanism for the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to discuss concerns related to employment discrimination of LGBT persons.
- **Public Engagement:** In Washington and at embassies and consulates abroad, departments and agencies use public statements, public events, and public outreach to governments and civil society to demonstrate support for LGBT persons.

Responding to Human Rights Abuses of LGBT Persons Abroad

We recognize the importance of acting quickly and effectively in countries where the rights of LGBT persons are at risk and have developed a rapid response mechanism to address situations of concern and persons at risk.

- **Rapid Response Mechanism:** Each of our embassies and consulates provide prompt human rights reporting on situations of concern. When a crisis emerges, an interagency task force is formed to coordinate with key stakeholders, including partner nations and civil society representatives.
- **Preventing and Responding to Violence and Discrimination:** The State Department – in collaboration with U.S.-based law enforcement organizations – trains law enforcement officers from other nations on the unique challenges and approaches to investigating, responding to, and preventing hate crimes. In 2014, the State Department sponsored counter hate crimes training for law enforcement officials from Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, and Mexico. In addition, State supports a Violent Crimes Task Force in Honduras that investigates and supports the prosecution of LGBT-related homicide cases.

Protecting Vulnerable LGBT Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The United States is committed to identifying protection gaps for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers and developing targeted interventions to address those gaps.

- **Training and Capacity-Building:** The Department of State has developed and completed training for Department staff and resettlement partners overseas and continues to engage with government and international organizations to promote protection of and assistance to LGBT refugees. The State Department also funds the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other non-governmental and international organization partners to develop training materials focused on LGBT refugees and asylum seekers and strengthen institutional capacity to address their unique needs. At the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service's Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate trains refugee and asylum officers using a comprehensive module on LGBT issues.
- **Programming:** The State Department has supported non-governmental partners to conduct research and pilot new programs to support LGBT refugees and asylum seekers in urban areas, and has also provided targeted assistance to partners working to provide safe shelter and services for LGBT survivors of gender-based violence.
- **Humanitarian Diplomacy:** We raise, on an on-going basis, the needs of LGBT refugees with host governments and the United Nations. The State Department annually communicates information to all U.S. embassies about the U.S. refugee resettlement process, including as it relates to LGBT applicants.
- **Assessing Risk:** Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) designed a new Risk Classification Assessment instrument that directs ICE officers to consider special vulnerabilities when making custody and classification decisions, including whether a person may be at risk due to sexual orientation or gender identity. The 2011 Performance-Based National Detention Standards requires that sexual orientation or

gender identity be considered as a potential special vulnerability requiring particular consideration in housing a detainee.

Engaging International Organizations in the Fight against LGBT Discrimination

The United States partners with a diverse group of countries to advocate for the human rights of LGBT persons at the United Nations and in other multilateral fora.

- **Coordination:** At the United Nations, the United States is part of the fifteen-member New York LGBT core group and the Geneva-based Group of Friends that coordinates on LGBT issues. We regularly raise LGBT issues in meetings with UN counterparts and have advocated for LGBT-related recommendations as part of the UN's Universal Periodic Review process.
- **Human Rights Engagement:** We co-sponsored and supported passage of the first-ever Human Rights Council resolution addressing the issue of violence toward LGBT persons, have consistently spoken in support of these issues through statements from the floor, and have used our convening power to bring countries and civil society together at a variety of meetings and events.
- **Health Engagement:** With the support of the United States, for the first time the World Health Organization has begun discussions on the negative repercussions of stigma, discrimination, and other barriers to care for LGBT persons in the health system as a whole. Our efforts resulted in a groundbreaking Pan-American Health Organization [resolution on LGBT health](#) in 2013, which emphasized that equal access to care is a health issue and called on countries to collect data on access to health care and health facilities for their LGBT population.
- **Multinational Development Bank (MDB) Engagement:** The Treasury Department encourages the MDBs to strengthen attention to LGBT issues in their human resources policies, and to protect the human rights of LGBT persons and advance social inclusion and non-discrimination through MDBs' projects, including, for example, studies to measure the economic cost of discrimination against LGBT persons, and steps to ensure that LGBT persons can access projects' benefits without being exposed to harm.

Strengthening U.S. Government Capacity

Through training, working groups, the development of personnel and external policies, and other mechanisms, department and agencies have redoubled their efforts to advance the human rights of LGBT persons. Such efforts include Peace Corps beginning in June 2013 to accept applications from same-sex couples to serve together abroad as Volunteers; USAID releasing its first LGBT Vision for Action; and the State Department developing an LGBT Toolkit to guide engagement at embassies globally and in Washington.